The Asian Center

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The Asian Center is an independent affiliate of CALC which seeks to introduce Asian culture to Americans and to provide up-to-date information on human rights throughout Asia. The Asian Center cooperates with Asian and American groups in sponsoring seminars, cultural events and public forums throughout the United States and Canada. In addition, the Asian Center provides on-going analysis of the changing events in Asia. In the past, these have included analyses of post-Iran U.S. policy, the effect of normalization of relations with the People's Republic of China, the effect of "modernization" on the cultures of Asia and an analysis of the effects of the Viet Nam war on U.S. foreign policy. The Asian Center publishes articles in a wide variety of publications in order to broaden its audience and has sponsored special human investigation trips to Iran, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan and South Korea in order to obtain first-hand information.

EAST TIMOR EMPHASIS

The Asian Center is presently involved in building a major campaign focused on East Timor. In East Timor, half of the population has been killed as a result of the Indonesian invasion. Of the 330,000 survivors, 320,000 are refugees. Meanwhile, the U.S. is supplying 90% of the arms used by Indonesia to mount this genocidal invasion and refrains from condemning it. In spite of the critical nature of the East Timorean struggle, many Americans are not aware of this tragic situation, nor are they aware of the role that the U.S. plays.

The campaign will be launched on Human Rights Day, December 9th by the Asian Center with an event in New York City featuring Noam Chomsky speaking on "U.S. Policy and East Timor: Genocide on the Sly."

The Asian Center also plans to urge participation in the campaign through general education and consciousness-raising on East Timor, for example, as an emphasis during Human Rights Week. The Asian Center will target February as East Timor month, asking people during that time to write to local newspapers, local congresspersons, the State Department, and the Indonesian embassy, objecting to what's happening there. The Asian Center, in coordination with TAPOL (U.S. Campaign for Human Rights in Indonesia) is planning to interview East Timor refugees in Portugal.

THAI STRUGGLE

The Asian Center is cooperating with the Union of Democratic Thais to bring Thongbai Thongbao, defense lawyer and Sutham Saengpratum, a member of the Bankgok 18 on a national tour. The purpose of the tour is to celebrate the release of the Bangkok 18, to thank their loyal supporters, which included many CALC members, and to help people develop a better understanding of the continuing struggle in Thailand. Some examples of continuing government repression include indiscriminate bombing of the South and a step up in the U.S. military aid credits. These weapons were requested for Thai defense in Southeast Asia but are being used instead against domestic opposition and resistance. Thailand is an example of forced urbanization to provide cheap labor for multinational corporations and to change consumption patterns so that the MNCs can develop consumer markets.

ON GOING ACTIVITIES

On the South Korean front, the Asian Center is concerned that Parks' assassination will lead to greater repression of opposition church groups and other leaders, and is cooperating with Koreans in the States to provide updates on the situation there.

A representative from the Asian Center attended the non-aligned conference in Cuba to meet with Prime Minister Pham Van Dong and received a personal invitation to travel to Viet Nam.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

In addition to the above emphases, the Asian Center will be engaged in several special projects as well. The first is a book by Don Luce and Becky Cantwell documenting U.S. policy and human rights practices in Asia—both civil and economic rights. The book will include a focus on the "Green Revolution" in Taiwan and Thailand. It will document how the exploitation of children in the textile factories in Asia also exploits Americans (through unemployment, moving the tax base out of our cities, using U.S. military aid at the taxpayers' expense to protect the dictatorships and multinationals abroad). The book will also include documentation on how U.S. military aid has increased repression in Asia.

The Asian Center will also be producing a multi-media show, including slides, music and script to show the disruption of Asian cultures caused by "Western Modernization."